

The present invention provides apparel bearing an electronic display which is adapted to show different images. In particular, the display panel is made from a flexible material, such as a light emitting polymer. A wearer of the apparel may alter at will the images which may include alphanumeric characters and graphic elements.

Claim 31 of the present invention recites apparel comprising a flexible panel which in turn is comprised of a fabric layer and a display layer. The references cited by the examiner are intrinsically inflexible.

For example, the examiner stated that a reference, Fitch (5912653), discloses an electronic display associated with a jacket. Unlike the present invention, however, Fitch requires inflexible electronics on the inside of the garment. That is, referring to Figs. 2A and 2B, Fitch shows a rigid printed circuit board underneath the liquid crystal display. This arrangement makes the garment in the area underneath the liquid crystal display rigid.

An inflexible garment is also disclosed in Branom. Although Branom discloses a fabric overlay (col. 4, lines 49-56) this does not impart flexibility. For one thing, Branom teaches that the fabric should be stiffened with a plasticized back (col. 4, lines 52-56). In addition, underlying the fabric is a printed circuit board which is inherently rigid and inflexible. That is, employing a fabric overlay does not make the garment flexible; the underlying rigid material will make the garment, at least in part, rigid.

Combining the teachings of Fitch and Branom does not lead to a flexible garment. That is, if one with ordinary skill combined Branom's concept with Fitch's concept, it would result in a printed circuit board underlying the garment. Thus, the result would be rigid and inflexible. The present invention eliminates the printed circuit board resulting in a flexible garment.

The advantage of the present invention over Fitch and Branom is apparent. Because Fitch and Branom each require a printed circuit board, there are limits to locations on a body and on objects their devices may be located. A planar device would best be situated on a relatively flat, less flexible area (such as the middle of a back). The present invention has no such limitation; because it is a flexible panel, it may be located virtually anywhere on the body and on irregular shaped objects.

Moreover, because of its flexibility, the present invention may be of virtually any size.

The examiner also recites Shanks. It is respectfully submitted that there no reference to suggest combining Shanks and Branom or Fitch. In fact, Shanks teaches away from both Branom and Fitch. Shanks indicates that a difference between light-emitting polymer technology and LED and LCD technology is that the former is non-planar while the latter is planar. That is, the devices of Fitch and Branom, in using LCD and LED technology respectively, are inherently rigid. As Shanks (5747928) teaches: "Most conventionally, liquid crystal displays are in the form of flat panel displays of rather limited dimension. The possibility of meeting the requirements of flexible displays . . . is not readily met by flat panel liquid crystal technology." (col 1, lines 33-40)

A person with ordinary skill in the art, with knowledge of Shanks, would be led away from Fitch and Branom.

The Examiner also states that claims 62-64 are anticipated by Gerber. However, Gerber discloses and claims LED displays (e.g., Gerber claim 25) rather than the flexible image display system of the present invention.

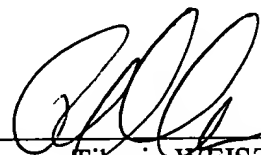
The Examiner states that claims 62-64 are unpatentable over Trucker in view of Fitch.

However, Trucker does not disclose a display able to display images and Fitch, for reasons stated above, discloses a planar device, and does not disclose a flexible garment. In addition, there is no reference that teaches that Fitch and Trucker should be read in light of each other.

It is respectfully submitted that these amendments overcome the rejections of the Examiner, that the subject application as amended claims novel and non-obvious subject matter, and that the subject application is in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,  
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